

S R I L A P R A B H U P A D A ' S

FREEDOM OF CHOICE QUOTES

DRESSING IN KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS



COMPILED BY

CHANDRASHEKHARA ACHARYA DĀSA
(CYRIL WOHRER, MST., OXFORD)

In the early 2000's, after graduating from the *brahmachari* ashram in ISKCON Los Angeles, a friend of mine told me, "Chandrashekara, did you ever read this?" On his laptop, he showed me a quote by Srila Prabhupada wherein Prabhupada said, "No, dhoti, I don't say. You have nice coat-pant. I don't say that you have to wear a dhoti. I never said that. You have adopted it. I never said that 'You put on dhoti.'"

I was shocked when I read this quote. I cross-referenced it on the Vedabase Folio program and, sure enough, Prabhupada had indeed said "I don't say that you have to wear a dhoti" in a conversation in Atlanta, in January 1977.

This incident sparked an intense curiosity on my side to research everything that Prabhupada had ever said about dressing, about clothes, about dhotis, saris and modern clothes, etc. I wanted to know everything that Prabhupada had ever said about how his followers can dress.

I discovered statement after statement by Prabhupada that I had never heard of before. I believe that to this day, the majority of ISKCON devotees have never heard these statements.

Every devotee must make a choice, every day, about how he or she dresses. This topic is therefore an issue that all of us identify with. "How do I want to represent ISKCON by my non-verbal body language?" is a question that we all ask ourselves. The answer to this inevitable question resides in *shastra* and in Srila Prabhupada's instructions.

After a decade of researching and collecting a substantial collection of statements by Prabhupada on the question of dress-code, I have come up with a system of categorization by which to make sense of everything that Prabhupada said on this topic. I have divided his statements into two categories, which I call A) the "pro-traditional Indian clothes" quotes, and, B) the "freedom of choice" quotes.

On one hand, Srila Prabhupada made undeniable statements to the effect that he appreciated dhotis and saris, that his disciples who dressed in "saffron robes" reminded him of "Vaikuntha angels," and that in ISKCON there is only "one fashion," i.e the "dress of a vaishnava, with a shaved head and tilak." These are examples of the "pro-traditional Indian clothes" quotes, which I have compiled in a different document than the one you currently hold in your hands. I can send these quotes to you - my email is easybhakti@gmail.com.

On the other hand, Srila Prabhupada also made statements in which he expressed total neutrality vis-à-vis how his followers dressed. Prabhupada even made explicit and unambiguous statements encouraging his followers to dress in Western clothes, stating, for example, that his followers dressing in Western clothes is what he had “always wanted.” This document, herewith, focuses on prominent statements by Prabhupada from this “freedom of choice” category of quotes. The end of this document also contains additional quotes from previous acharyas and from the *Caitanya Caritamrita*, *Caitanya Bhagavata*, *Haribhakti Vilasa*, and *Srimad Bhagavatam* - all pointing, I claim, to a type of Bhakti-yoga in which non-monastic devotees are given the full freedom to dress according to their personal preference, in all circumstances (including, therefore, inside ISKCON centers).

I do not know if you will experience a similar feeling of shock when you read these “freedom of choice” quotes. But assuming that you are loyal and dedicated to Srila Prabhupada and to ISKCON, it behooves you (it behooves all of us) to become well-versed about what our founder-acharya exactly said about dressing in Krishna consciousness. I pray that those us who read this document may become inspired by Srila Prabhupada’s sartorial liberality - a sartorial liberality that our Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition, which Prabhupada proudly represented “as it is,” has always possessed.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

Your servant,

Chandrashekhar acharya dasa

Chandrashekhar acharya dasa

(Cyril Wohrer, Mst., Oxford)

Quotes from Prabhupada's lectures and letters

"After hearing *Bhagavad-Gita*, you will have to remain in the same position. Not that after hearing this *Bhagavad-Gita*, as you are kindly coming here, you will have to take a dress like me and give up your family connection and become a mendicant like me. No, no. It is not meant like that. You have to change your mentality. That's all."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, New York, May 1966)

"Similarly, if our purpose is Krishna consciousness, either I dress myself in this orange color or either you dress in coat, pant, and shirt, oh, there is no difference. There is no difference because the aim is the same. Everyone combinedly, we have formed a society to work combinedly. Oh, there is no restriction that, "Only these orange-colored sannyasis will be allowed and not the white dress, a man in coat-pants," no. That is not purpose. If the purpose is that we have to become Krishna conscious—we have to work combinedly in Krishna consciousness—there is no question of changing the dress, neither you haven't got to renounce your present position."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, New York, August 24, 1966)

"If somebody dresses like nice American gentleman without any robes, I have no objection."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, October, 1967)

"Kirtanananda suggested to me when he was here that the Americans do not like the robes and flag. I told him personally if you think that Americans in great numbers will follow you, simply for not having robes and flag, I therefore advised him to drop for a few days in London & test this theory."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, 13 October, 1967)

"You can become a swami even with your this hats and coats. That doesn't matter."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, May 4, 1968)

"Householders may wear dhotis in the Temple, or as *they like* [emphasis mine]"

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, March, 1968)

"It is not that if you do not come in that dress in our temple you will not understand our philosophy. That is not... We don't mean that. But it is convenient. But anyone who does not want to change this dress, that does not matter. We don't insist. These brahmacaris, they voluntarily change. Otherwise there are many students, just like we have got two, three students, they are working. They come just like ordinary American gentlemen. So there is no objection in that way. Dress is not very important thing."

(Srila Prabhupada, Interview, February 1, 1968, Los Angeles)

"Regarding dress, I have already written to you that you can dress as smartly as possible to deal with the public, and dress is immaterial in Krishna Consciousness. Consciousness is within. I am a *sannyasi*, but if some important work requires I dress myself just like a smart gentleman, I would immediately accept it. So it is not a problem."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, September 3, 1969)

"Dress has to be accepted according to the taste of others and foodstuffs accepted according to the eater's taste. So if you think this kind of dress will attract more people, you can dress yourself in that manner. Our real dress is the *tilaka* and *sikha*."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, 1969)

"Yes. Style may be different. That's all right."

(Srila Prabhupada, room conversation with Allen Ginsberg, May 12, 1969)

"So if you don't accept this dress, that does not mean you cannot be in Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness can be achieved in any condition of life. It doesn't matter whether you are dressed in this way or in your American way or any way. That doesn't matter. [...] If you have no objection to accept this dress, that's nice. But if you have got objection, then we have no objection. Krishna consciousness is different from this dress or that dress."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, Boston, May 1969)

Prabhupada: All right. Come on, Tosana Krishna. You have no robe?

Tosana Krishna: No.

Prabhupada: All right. Come on. (end)

(Srila Prabhupada, Lecture, New Vrindavan, May 25, 1969)

"My missionary activities are especially meant for the Western countries. To go to India is a secondary question. The primary thing is that we establish our institution firmly in the Western countries. So when we are sound in our preaching work in the Western countries, that news automatically goes to India as it is already publicized."

(Letter to Tamala Krsna, Los Angeles, May 27, 1970)

Guest (2): How do you recognize someone who has already a family and he's working and who wants to progress in Krishna consciousness? Is he, does he have to give up his job and shave his hair and wear robes?

Prabhupada: No, no. No, never. Simply you have to see, what you are doing, by such action Krishna is satisfied. That's all. You can do anything.

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, London, August 1971)

"Generally *grihasthas* wear white for the men and colorful saris for the women. In India our householder devotee men are all wearing white cloths and they all look very, very nice. You can do also *if you like* [emphasis mine]."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, January 1971).

Interviewer: Mm ... And what about your dress? Don't you think your dress alienates people?

Prabhupada: Oh, dress is not that important. We can wear shirt, coat, pants. The dress is not important—the important thing is to become God conscious.

(From *The Great Transcendental Adventure*, Melbourne, 1971)

"Yes, occasionally devotees may be pictured with full head of hair instead of *sikha*. You should use your own discretion; the garb can be Vedic or American. There is no harm. Dress has nothing to do with the soul."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, Calcutta 19 May, 1971)

"Our unique asset is our purity. No one anywhere can match it. That will be noticed eventually and appreciated, as long as we do not diminish or neglect the highest standard of purity in performing our routine work, not that we require to display or announce ourselves in very clever ways to get attention. No, our pure standard is enough. Let us stand on that basis."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, December 1971)

"When one becomes Krishna conscious actually, he does not even hate material things because he becomes expert how to utilize everything for Krishna. Krishna consciousness is so nice. We do not hate anything material because we have learned from our disciplic succession how to utilize material things for Krishna's service."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter 1972)

"One who has unflinching faith in Krishna, one who is cent percent engaged to render service to Krishna, he is called sadhu. Sadhu does not mean a kind of dress or kind of beard. No. Sadhu means a devotee, perfect devotee of Krishna. That is a sadhu."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, Sydney, February 1973)

Dr. Patel: I am your disciple in all respects. I should not put on your, these clothes and come and do all the...

Prabhupada: No, no, no. That is not our program. That is not our program. We do not ask anyone to change his cloth, never. I never ask them to change his cloth, or change his position. That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's philosophy.

(Morning Walk, Bombay, February 17, 1974)

Guru Gauranga: Speaking about clothes, Monsieur le President says that he has been to India, and he understands that one dresses like this in India. But why would the disciples dress in America or in Europe in this way? Is it necessary?

Prabhupada: No. It is not necessary. Dress you can have as you like. It doesn't matter, because dress is a dead thing. Real thing is that we want a living being who can understand.

(Srila Prabhupada, welcomed by Governor at Hotel De Ville, Geneva, May 30, 1974)

Jyotirmayi: No, no. He's saying why are we dressing like that, like Indians?

Prabhupada: I have not said that you dress like that. You like, you do it. Did I say that you do it? [...] we are not concerned with the dress, we are concerned with the advancement of spiritual understanding, that's all.

(Srila Prabhupada, Room conversation, Paris, June 1974)

Priest: Maybe for ladies and girls certainly, but for the dhoti and...

Prabhupada: But we are not concerned with the dress, we are concerned with the advancement of spiritual understanding, that's all.

(Srila Prabhupada, Room Conversation with Christian priest, Paris, 1974)

Similarly, we never preach that, "You dress like this." But the student, they like this dress.

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, Paris, June 1974)

"We do not condemn modern civilization, but we don't like to get it at the cost of God Consciousness; that is suicide."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, December 1974)

"Prabhupada: Oh, yes, oh, yes, you can become spiritual in your this dress. Simply you have to learn what it is from the books. The dress... dress is not very important thing [...]."

(Srila Prabhupada, Interview, March 5th, 1975)

Dr. Wolfe: Srila Prabhupada, the dhoti is not important then.

Prabhupada: Not important. He can have *dhoti*, you can have pant, you can have... It doesn't matter."

(Srila Prabhupada, Los Angeles, June 24, 1975)

"When we held that ceremony in Delhi, L.I.C. Ground, many, many secretaries, officers, they came and they were dancing with their hat- coatpart. So it is so nice."

(Srila Prabhupada, lecture, September 1975)

"So agree to that proposal, that "We shall speak to everyone about this *Bhagavad-gita* as Krishna has spoken." Then you become a *bhakta*. That's all. You can do it in your office. You can do in your home. Krishna does not say that "First of all you become a *sannyasi* and you change your dress and become like these Krishna conscious men." No. You remain in your position. But do this. That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's... *sthane sthitah sruti- gatam tanu-van-manobhir*. You remain in your place, *sthane sthitau*. Simply you hear from Krishna or from Krishna's representative and do it, that's all. Where is the difficulty?"

(Room Conversation with Indian Guests, Tehran, March 13, 1975)

Nanadarani: Devotees, sometimes they want to dress in old clothes, they want to be very strict, they want to be very austere, but when the businessmen come and they see a devotee with shaved head and old rags on, then they think...

Prabhupada: Shocked...

Nanadarani: Yes. "What is this?" you know. So, but at the same time we don't want to always dress very nicely, we want to be devotees. Prabhupada: We must be clean.

Nanadarani: Clean, yes.

Prabhupada: The dress is not important - cleanliness.

Nanadarani: Here we wear mostly street clothes, like the Iranians, suits and dresses.

Prabhupada: Just like he is not well dressed, but anyone who will see, he'll immediately find he's cleansed. That is wanted. Cleansed dress. Dress is not important.

(Srila Prabhupada, conversation, August 1976)

"If the young people become very serious, if you find it is detrimental to have them wear *dhoti* and shave head, that is not necessary."

(Srila Prabhupada, letter, March 1976)

Devotee: Well actually we're not coming on to them like we are, you know, Hare Krishnas or anything like that. We are going in karmi clothes.

Prabhupada: No, no, there are many communities, *grihastha*, in our Hare Krishna movement. We don't say...

(Srila Prabhupada, room conversation, November 1976)

Rameshvara: They will not be so envious if they see that people who dress in Western style and keep their families and keep their jobs are also chanting Hare Krishna.

Prabhupada: We say... We say that, that we simply say, that "You change your consciousness."

Rameshvara: Not change your dress, but change your consciousness. Prabhupada: No, we never said. If you prefer that kind of dress, costly, you prefer it, but we are simplified. Now, nowadays coat-pant is very costly. If you can spend your money, costly dress, we have no objection. If they want to come in that dress, come in. If you want, come in.

Rameshvara: I'm just saying that it is a little difficult if they wear their *dhoti*. Prabhupada: No, *dhoti*, I don't say. You have nice coat-pant. I don't say that you have to... I never said that. You have adopted it. (laughs) I never said that "You put on *dhoti*."

(Srila Prabhupada, conversation, January 1977)

"*Tilaka* must be there. And so far dress is concerned, you can dress up to the taste of the modern people."

(Srila Prabhupada, Room Conversation — Bombay, March 31, 1977)

"Better go and speak philosophy in your *grihastha* dress, not this dress, but you have nice coat, pants, gentleman. Who says no? I never said. Rather I shall be glad to see that up-to-date gentlemen with *tilaka* and *sikha* are speaking. That is very prestigious everywhere. Why this false dress? What is the wrong to become *grihastha*?"

(Srila Prabhupada, Room Conversation, Bombay, January 7, 1977)

Mr. Faill: Krishna consciousness seems to involve shaving the head and wearing saffron robes. How can an ordinary man caught up in family life practice Krishna consciousness?

Srila Prabhupada: The saffron robes and the shaven head are not essential, although they create a good mental situation, just as when a military man is dressed properly he gets energy—he feels like a military man. Does that mean that unless he is in uniform he cannot fight? No. In the same way, God consciousness cannot be checked—it can be revived in any circumstances—but certain conditions are helpful. Therefore we prescribe that you live in a certain way, dress in a certain way, eat in a certain way, and so on. These things are helpful for practicing Krishna consciousness, but they are not essential.

Mr. Faill: Then one can be a student of Krishna consciousness while going about normal daily life?

Srila Prabhupada: Yes.

(Srila Prabhupada, The Science of Self Realization, chapter 5)

Devotee: Krishna consciousness is spreading.

Allen Ginsberg: Yes, but what it requires is an adaptation to Indian dress and ...

Srila Prabhupada: That is not very important.

(Back to Godhead Magazine, 2000)

Quotes from Srila Prabhupada's books

“One cannot become detached from the attraction of the material world simply by dressing himself in saffron cloth.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Bhagavad-Gita* 15.6, purport)

“One may live without material discomfiture, but at the same time he should learn the art of loving Krishna.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Nectar of Devotion*, Preface)

“They are all the Lord’s eternal associates and always remember Radha and Krishna; [...] but if he tries to imitate them taking on their dress and characteristics, he becomes the plaything of *maya* ...”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Vrindavan Bhajan*, verse 25)

“Therefore Arjuna accepted the position of disciple. Becoming a disciple he listened to the *Bhagavad-Gita*. All his ignorance dissipated as well as his material bondage. His material bondage was cut, but he was not dressed as a *sannyasi*.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Vrindavan Bhajan*, verses 14-15)

“In the *Caitanya-caritamrita*, it is clearly said that one should accept the emotional activities of the associates of Krishna, not imitate their dress. [...] One should think of Radha and Krishna twenty-four hours a day and engage in Their service within one’s mind, not externally change one’s dress.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*, chapter 31)

“Being a *bhakta* doesn’t simply mean wearing *tilaka* and robes. One is not a *bhakta* if he has a taste for material sense enjoyment. A true *bhakta* wants to satisfy not his senses but the senses of Krishna.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Teachings of Lord Kapiladeva*)

“Who is a sadhu? A sadhu is not just an ordinary man with a saffron robe or long beard. A sadhu is described in *Bhagavad-gita* as one who unflinchingly engages in devotional service.”

(*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.25.20, purport)

“Prajapati Daksha was correct in stating that changing one's dress cannot detach one from this material world. [...] In summary, unless one's knowledge is awakened, renunciation cannot take place, for without elevated knowledge one cannot give up attachment for material enjoyment.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 6.5.40, purport)

“The preachers of Krishna consciousness must go forward—in their Vaishnava dress or any other dress — for the purpose of preaching.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.5.7, purport)

“For *paramahamsas*, or *sannyasis* in the Vaishnava order, preaching is the first duty. To preach, such *sannyasis* may accept the symbols of *sannyasa*, such as the *danda* and *kamandalu*, or sometimes they may not. Generally the Vaishnava *sannyasis*, being *paramahamsas*, are automatically called *babajis*, and they do not carry a *kamandalu* or *danda*. Such a *sannyasi* is free to accept or reject the marks of *sannyasa*. His only thought is “Where is there an opportunity to spread Krishna consciousness?” Sometimes the Krishna consciousness movement sends its representative *sannyasis* to foreign countries where the *danda* and *kamandalu* are not very much appreciated. We send our preachers in ordinary dress to introduce our books and philosophy. Our only concern is to attract people to Krishna consciousness. We may do this in the dress of *sannyasi* or in the regular dress of gentlemen. Our only concern is to spread interest in Krishna consciousness.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Srimad Bhagavatam* 7.13.9, purport)

“From the instructions given to King Prataparudra by Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, we can understand that we may change our dress in any way to facilitate our service. When our members change their dress to

meet the public or to introduce our books, they are not breaking the devotional principles. The real principle is to spread the Krishna consciousness movement, and if one has to change into regular Western dress for this purpose, there should be no objection.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Caitanya Caritamrita*, Madhya 14.5, purport)

“The *sannyasi* dress is actually an attraction for material formality. Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu did not like such formality, but He wanted the essence of it — service to Mukunda. Such determination in any condition is *paratma-nistha*. That is required. The conclusion is that the *sannyasa* order depends not on the dress but the determination to serve Mukunda.”

(Srila Prabhupada, *Caitanya Caritamrita*, Madhya 3.8, purport)

Quotes from disciples of Srila Prabhupada

"We shall take every opportunity," said Prabhupada. "We are the best opportunists. *Anukulyena Krishna*. This is *anukula* – favorable for spreading Krishna consciousness – and we shall immediately accept it. It doesn't matter what it is."

(Srila Prabhupada in *Prabhupada Lilamrita* by Satsvarupa Goswami, Chapter 51)

"I met with the *brahmacaris* of the library party, and we started organizing right away. They bought suits and wigs, and I got an outfit too. (I had asked Srila Prabhupada if it was all right for me as a sannyasi to wear a civilian disguise. He replied that we are not interested in dress, we are interested in service)."

(Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami, from his autobiography)

"Prabhupada once saw a picture of Balavanta preaching into a microphone during a political campaign. Behind him sat the mayor and another candidate. Balavanta wore a suit and tie, *tilaka*, and *tulasi* beads. His *sikha* was trimmed, and his hair was grown out. Around his neck he wore his beadbag, and he was fingering his beads as he spoke. When Prabhupada saw the picture, he said, "this is what we want, to preach in American dress." He said we should be known as American Krishnas."

(Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami, *Prabhupada Nectar*)

"Gopal Krishna - he was married at the time - he was standing at the doorway. Prabhupada was calling him in, but he didn't want to come in because he had on his karmi clothes. He had just come from work. He was a little embarrassed to be in front of Srila Prabhupada like that. Prabhupada said, "No, no. You come in. Come in." Prabhupada told him, "You are the real *sannyasi*; not he who lights no fires and performs no work."

(Prabhupada's disciple Piyari Mohan Prabhu in his *Remembering Srila Prabhupada* lecture, Dallas, Texas, circa 2011)

"When Srila Prabhupada was asked how his disciples would be recognized, what was the answer? They will wear dhotis? They will have large neck beads? They will have a big halo? No! He said they will be perfect gentlemen."

(Sridhar Swami, *ISKCON Communications Journal*, December 1993)

"My father said [to Prabhupada], "I cannot believe that it is responsible to bring a foreign culture, that is, Indian culture, into Germany. It will not survive. The people who are now with you will not be able to stay. It is almost like taking a crocodile from Egypt and transplanting it in the cold River Rhine. It is irresponsible." Prabhupada took up the challenge. He looked at my father. He said, "You can become Krishna conscious in suit and tie." My father understood. He understood that Krishna Consciousness is not a question of culture. The dress may change according to culture. No - you didn't have to dress in an Indian way. You didn't have to accept the externals to become Krishna conscious. To this day he remembers this. [...] My father thought, "What a pleasant encounter."

(Sacinandana Swami, *Prabhupada Memories*, part 79)

"The current temple room in L.A was not what Prabhupada intended to be the temple room [...] Prabhupada had another idea that wasn't our vision. His vision was to have mainstream America come in with their shoes on and sit in the pews and hear *Bhagavad Gita* and *kirtan* on the stage. We put Prabhupada's *vyasasana* on stage and he had Visnujana play the organ [...] Prabhupada didn't want the stain glass windows removed. "Don't touch anything," he said. Even the pulpit - where the minister spoke - he kept that. It was so surreal to sit in the pews and hear *Bhagavad Gita* and Visnujana singing *Jaya Madhava* on the organ. Even Prabhupada would play the organ. Prabhupada said, "They are inclined to come to Church. So let them come back to this Church, but hear *Bhagavad Gita* and *kirtan*." Prabhupada was thinking mainstream

America, not hippies. Prabhupada's vision wasn't that we all become monks. He wanted judges, politicians, doctors to come to the temple. They weren't going to become monks and shave up. But we had another vision: "come to the temple and shave up."

(Gargamuni Prabhu, Disc 3 in *Following Srila Prabhupada* DVD series)

"Mukunda used to give class on his way to work in the city [London], dressed in a suit - minus the jacket as I recall. He told me Prabhupada had asked that he dressed neatly. That was all he required."

(Ranchor Dasa, lecture 2012)

"Ajita wanted to preach in the universities. He asked, "Srila Prabhupada, should we go out on *harinam* in dhotis and saris? Maybe they are not going to look at upon us going out in dhotis and everything very well in Sweden. So what should we do, Srila Prabhupada?" Srila Prabhupada said, "That's alright. You can wear suit. You wear suit and tie, and your wife can wear long dress. You can go and preach like that."

(Ambika Devi Dasi, *Prabhupada Memories*, part 17)

Other significant quotes from shastra and from previous acharyas

“Those who, **even while remaining situated in their established social positions** [emphasis mine], throw away the process of speculative knowledge and with their body, words and mind offer all respects to descriptions of Your personality and activities, dedicating their lives to these narrations, which are vibrated by You personally and by Your pure devotees, certainly conquer Your Lordship, although You are otherwise unconquerable by anyone within the three worlds.”

(*Srimad Bhagavatam*, 10.14.3)

“Giving up the decorations of the temporary material body, one should dress himself with scraps of cloth found in rejected places, or with the bark of trees. In this way one should learn to be satisfied in any material situation.”

(*Srimad Bhagavatam*, 11.3.25)

“A man will be known as *brahmaṇa* just by his wearing a thread. [...] A person's spiritual position will be ascertained merely according to external symbols [...]”

(*Srimad Bhagavatam* 12.2.3-4)

“Do not adopt *markata-vairagya*, external monkey renunciation, simply to impress the general populace. Internally develop staunch faith in Sri Krishna, and externally carry out your worldly responsibilities in such a way that no one can detect your inner mood. If you act like this, Sri Krishna will very quickly deliver you from material existence.”

(Lord Caitanya to Raghunatha Dasa (before him becoming Raghunatha Dasa Goswami), in *Sri Caitanya Caritamrita*, Madhya 16, 238-239)

Na desakalaniyamo na sucasauca nirmaya...

“The chanting does not depend for its effectiveness upon performance in any particular time or place or state of purity.”

(Sanatana Goswami, *Hari Bhakti Vilasa* 2.11.411)

“When one is not attached to anything, but at the same time accepts everything in relation to Krishna, one is rightly situated above possessiveness. On the other hand, one who rejects everything without knowledge of its relationship to Krishna is not as complete in his renunciation.”

(Rupa Goswami, *Bhakti-rasamrita-sindhu* 1.2.255-256)

“To be controlled by prejudice causes many problems. From prejudice arises partiality; from partiality comes disrespect for truth. [...] Wearing the signs of the Vaishnava is one of the methods of cultivating devotion, involving the body. But to think that that is the distinguishing characteristic of a Vaishnava is a prejudice arising from sectarianism. Controlled by such false beliefs, a person may not respect a real Vaishnava who is not wearing those marks.”

(Bhaktivinoda Thakur, *Sri Caitanya-Siksamrita* 3.3)

“Where there is too much concern for external appearance, there is inner tension to the soul’s inner function.”

(Bhaktivinoda Thakur, *Jaiva Dharma*)

“Those who are endowed with spiritual vision can recognize foreign *saragrahis* (essence seekers) as fellow yogis. *Komala-sraddhas* (those of weak faith), and those who are inexperienced, think of them as worldly or sometimes even against God. But *saragrahis* can easily recognize fellow

spiritualists, who are endowed with all good qualities, whether of their own country or foreign. Even though their customs, symbols, worship, language, and dress are different, they easily address one another as “brother””.

(Bhaktivinoda Thakur, *Krishna Samhita*)

“O! Abandoning the performance of adorning yourself with dramatic clothing and ornaments in imitation of Lord Krishna, may you become attached to chanting His pure holy names. May you become the loyal follower of Nitai Chanda, thereby renouncing all evil obsessions.”

(Bhaktivinoda Thakur, *Sri Chand Baul*, song 4)

“The only requirement for clothing is that you should cover the body and be clean and free from unpleasant odors.”

(Bhaktivinoda Thakur, *Jaiva Dharma*, chapter 9)

“We are preaching by approaching the people of the world dressed even somewhat better than they, showing knowledge even somewhat greater than theirs, being even somewhat more stylish than they - without which they would think us worthless and not listen to our *Hari-katha*.”

(Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, *Goloka Vani* 1.55)

“Language is just a dress; the purport or intention of the text is the body. If someone describes the Supreme Lord by wearing the language-dress of twentieth century civilization, or if Vedic mantras are written with the paper, pen and ink of the twentieth century, would we say that they cannot be called Vedic mantras? This type of orthodoxy is born of extremely abominable ignorance.”

(Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, in *Sri Sarasvati Sanlapa*)

"We can live among millions of rupees and bedecked in costly clothing if our intention is to serve Bhagavan. There is no difficult on the path of devotional service."

(Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur, quoted in *Bhaktisiddhanta Vaibhava* by Bhakti Vikasa Swami)